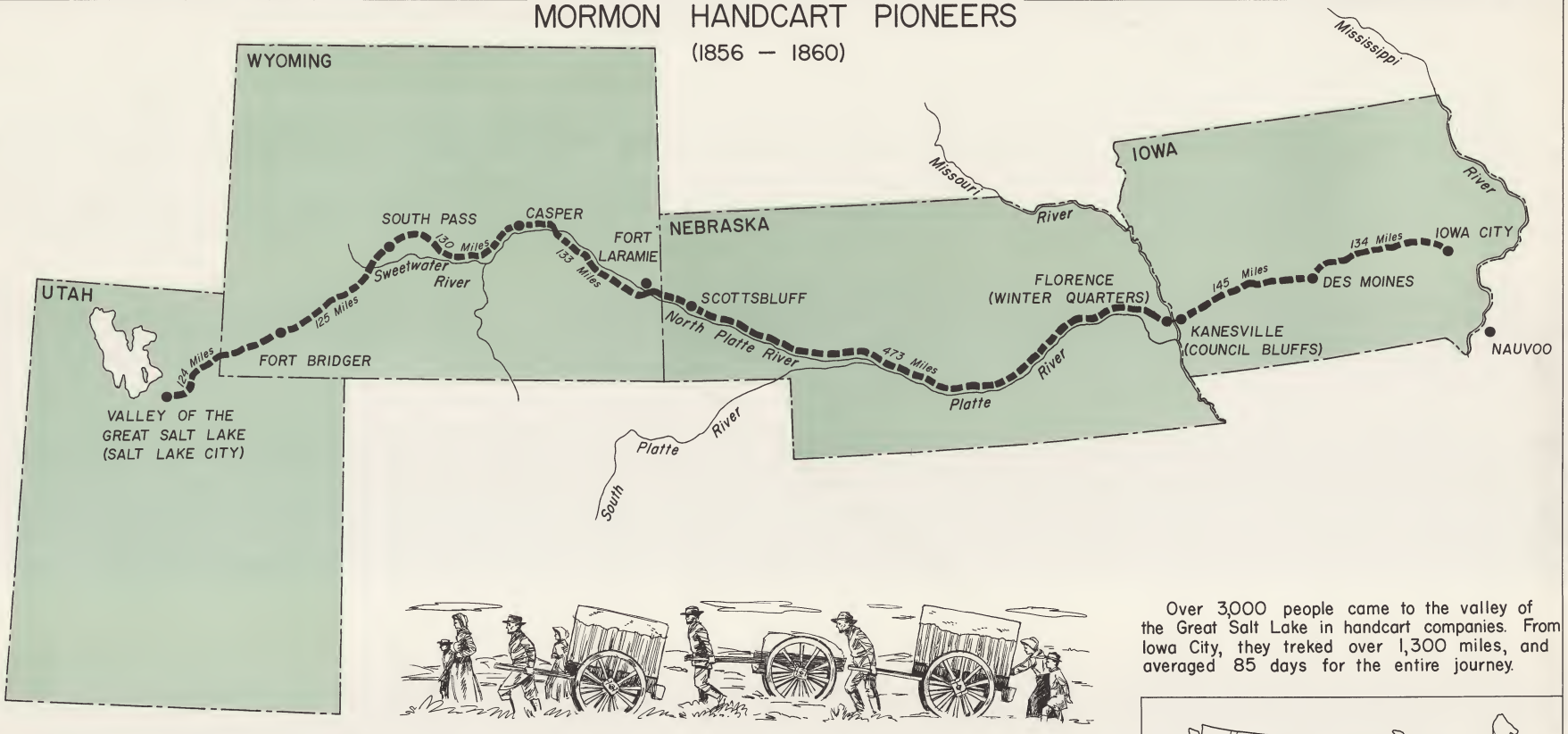
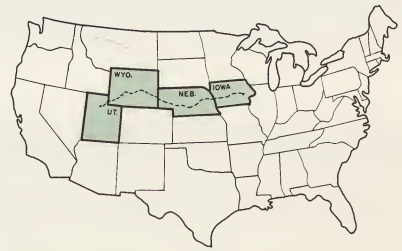
MORMON HANDCART PIONEERS

(1856 — 1860)



Over 3,000 people came to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in handcart companies. From Iowa City, they treked over 1,300 miles, and averaged 85 days for the entire journey.



Section of the United States traversed by the Handcart Pioneers (states are to scale)

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1855, President Brigham Young announced the plan of walking across the prairies with handcarts:

". . . We cannot afford to purchase wagons and teams as in times past. I am consequently thrown back upon my old plan — to make handcarts and let the emigration foot it, and draw upon them the necessary supplies, having a cow or two for every ten. They can come just as quick if not quicker, and much cheaper — can start earlier and escape the prevailing sickness which annually lays so many of our brethren in the dust. A great majority of them walk now even with the teams which are provided, and have a great deal more care and perplexity than they would have if they came without them. They will only need ninety days ration from the time of their leaving the Missouri River and as the settlements extend up the Platte, not that much. The carts can be made without a particle of iron, with wheels hooped, made strong and light, and one, or if the family be large, two of them will bring all that they will need upon the plains.

"Let all the Saints who can . . . come while the way is open before them; let the poor also come; . . . let them come on foot, with handcarts, or wheelbarrows; let them gird up their loins and walk through, and nothing shall hinder or stay them."

To each hundred were alloted five tents, twenty handcarts, and one wagon drawn by three yoke of oxen. Tents and general supplies were stowed in the wagons, but each family carried its own rations and its quota of the sick and helpless in the handcart, while the women and children, from the toddlers to the aged, walked the weary trail from Winter Quarters on the Missouri River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

A TEACHING AID
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THE MORMON STORY
by Rulon S. Howells
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